

# HIRING FORMER OFFENDERS IS GOOD BUSINESS

THE CENTER FOR YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS  
EMILY MUNSON, B.A.

Employers who hire former offenders are creating opportunities for those individuals and helping society as a whole. By providing work opportunities, employers help former offenders become productive members of society.

**Those employers get skilled and motivated employees in return.** Most former offenders have completed programs designed to help them develop the skills needed for the work world. The effective resettlement of former offenders can therefore make a crucial contribution to crime prevention and community safety.

## Nationwide statistics on inmate populations and releases

- 650,000 inmates leaving state and federal prisons annually
- 12 million inmates leaving local jails
- High recidivism rates
- Acute impacts on families and communities
- Individual challenges are substantial
- **Fiscal implications-\$60 Billion spent on corrections every year**

(Solomon, 2006)

## North Carolina Offender Population: July 9, 2007

Prison Inmates: 38,408

Probationers: 113,932

Parolees: 2,849

Total: 155,189

**For updated information go to [www.doc.state.nc.us/](http://www.doc.state.nc.us/)**

## Government Incentives for hiring Former Offenders

- Employers can apply for a **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** and receive a federal tax credit up to \$2,400 for each qualified new employee. The WOTC is authorized by the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 and encourages employers to hire job seekers in eight targeted groups—including ex-offenders by reducing the hiring organization's federal income tax liability. For more information, visit [www.uses.doleta.gov/wotcdata.asp](http://www.uses.doleta.gov/wotcdata.asp)
- WOTC Forms found at [www.irs.ustreas.gov](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov)
- **The Federal Bonding Program** offers individual bonds to employers free of charge for job applicants who are denied coverage by commercial insurance carriers. The bond is an insurance policy that protects the employer in case of any loss of money or property because of employee theft or dishonesty. The job applicant or the employer can request the bond. For more information, visit [www.doleta.gov/wwt/documents/fedbonding.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/wwt/documents/fedbonding.cfm)
- Federal Bureau of Prisons—[www.bop.gov](http://www.bop.gov)
- [www.bonds4jobs.com](http://www.bonds4jobs.com)



## 11 Myths about Hiring Former Offenders

1. All convicts are alike.

Debunk: All crimes are not alike and neither are convicts.

2. Former offenders have no useful work skills.

Debunk: The modern prison industry makes and sells a wide variety of products in competitive markets. Also, many inmates are able to acquire higher education while incarcerated.

3. Educated people never go to jail

Debunk: An increasing number of men and women with professional credentials are being convicted of white-collar crimes and sentenced to prison.

4. Most prison inmates serve full sentences

Debunk: Every year a convicted person has less chance of serving his or her full sentence.

5. Only convicted criminals are offenders

De bunk: Many people are convicted of crimes, learn from their mistakes and never commit another crime. Also, many people commit crimes and are not caught.

6. Incarceration does not produce repentance

Debunk: Most former offenders do not want to go back to prison and are therefore willing to work and have a positive role in society.

7. Former offenders cannot hold a job

Debunk: Several case studies have shown that former offender workforces have a lower-than-average turnover rates.

8. Success in hiring former offenders is rare.

Debunk: There are many incentives and benefits in hiring former offenders. Studies show that businesses are becoming more receptive to the idea of hiring former offenders.

9. Laws generally prohibit the hiring of ex-offenders

Debunk: It is true that regulations prohibit industries such as national banks from hiring property thieves, forgers, etc. Sex offenders can't work with children, and individuals with prison records are barred from many sensitive government jobs.

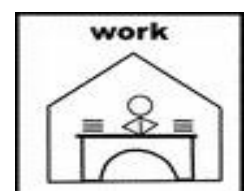
10. Ordinary employees will not accept "ex-cons"

Debunk: Former offenders should be judged by the quality of their work, their willingness to cooperate, and their attitude and competence.

11. Once employed, former offenders need special monitoring

Debunk: Given a typical employment situation, after the initial orientation and job training, former offenders can be supervised with the same amount of direction that is given to the rest of the group.

(Henry, 1989)





**Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)** is a comprehensive, strategic approach to reducing gun and gang violence in America. The various crime reduction initiatives in the past decade have taught us that to have a truly significant impact, the federal government must do more than just increase its arrest and prosecution numbers. Our efforts must be comprehensive. We must build effective partnerships with our state and local counterparts. We must enhance our capacity to obtain and analyze crime and other data that should guide our strategies and afford us the opportunity to measure the impact of our efforts. We must maintain an edge in the attack on gun and gang violence by providing expansive and comprehensive training for federal, state, and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors. We must convey the priorities, message, and results of our efforts to the media and community members. And we must build a powerful and lasting coalition with our citizens—one that empowers them to be agents of change in their own communities.

**For more information about PSN go to [www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov)**

### **Team up with your local Project Safe Neighborhoods Task Force**

**If you are a business owner and would like to help your community, there are several ways to get involved:**

- Donate materials and services that can help community groups make a difference.
- Provide paid time off to your employees who are active volunteers in community crime prevention activities.
- Educate employees about ways to reduce the risk that they or their family members face as possible victims of violence.
- Adopt a school in a distressed area. Become mentors and friends to the children.
- Give your own talents. Volunteer your organizational and managerial skills to help your local Task Force.
- Provide jobs and on-the-job training to young people at risk for violence.
- Display announcements for meetings of various groups working to reduce violence.
- Team up to sponsor billboards, bus cards, and other forms of communication against gun violence and crime.
- Communicate your concerns, plans, and hopes for change. Bring them into the efforts to reduce gun, gang, and violent crime.
- Collectively address the legislative bodies (city, county, and state) in your community to make them aware of the issues surrounding gun, gang, and violent crime. Develop and communicate what the business community believes should be done in response.

Thursday, March 30, 2006

### City of Durham Receives Award for Re-entry Hiring Program

#### *Award Recognizes Innovative Programs*

A City of Durham program to employ individuals who have been incarcerated has garnered statewide recognition as an innovative program to help reduce ex-offender recidivism in Durham. The City's Department of Human Resources has received the Excellence in Human Resources Award for its Re-entry Hiring Program from the North Carolina Chapter of the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA-NC).

This award recognized the City's program for assisting individuals who have a previous criminal history to obtain entry-level positions with the City. To qualify for the City's Re-entry Hiring Program, applicants must be referred by the Durham Job Link Career Center or the Durham County Criminal Justice Resource Center (DCCJRC), which offers job training, counseling, drug treatment and other support to ex-offenders on probation. Once hired, the City provides up to six months of on-the-job training based on the participants' skill levels through the City's Office of Economic and Employment Development. In addition, the City designates mentors to assist the participants with job duties, work rules, performance improvement and interaction with co-workers. Since the inception of the City's program in 2004, 10 ex-offenders have been hired to work in the City's Departments of Solid Waste Management, Water Management and Public Works.

For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.durhamnc.gov/news/NewsDisplay.cfm?vNewsID=1053>

Or contact Major Jim Bjurstrom at 919-560-4322 or email at [jim.bjurstrom@durhamnc.gov](mailto:jim.bjurstrom@durhamnc.gov)

### PROJECT REENTRY: Winston-Salem, NC

**Project Re-entry's mission** is to improve reintegration of ex-offenders, reduce criminal justice costs and increase public safety through a pre- and post- release system that coordinates NC Department of Correction, ex-offenders, community colleges, JobLink Systems, faith based ministries, employers, community organizations and residents.

#### PRE-RELEASE SERVICES

- **Individual Needs Assessment**
- **"Changing Negatives into Positives" Workshop**
- **How To Ask For Help: Accessing Local Resources & Services**
- **Our Ever-Changing World: A Look at Societal Changes**
- **Family Reunification Realities**
- **"Make Your Time In Work for You" Workshop**
- **Employment & Training Opportunities**
- **Credit and Budgeting class**

#### POST-RELEASE SERVICES

- **Career Development Training**
- **Personalized Case Management**
- **Individual Counseling**
- **Job Skills Development**
- **Child Support Mediation**
- **Housing**
- **Family Reunification Counseling**
- **Vocational Skills Training & Certification**
- **Substance Abuse Relapse Prevention Counseling**
- **Personal Assistance Services**  
(bus passes, emergency financial assistance, work tools, clothing, hygiene needs)

**For More Information about Project Safe Neighborhoods in Your Community and How to Get Involved, contact:**

**Resource Coordinators for PSN middle district of North Carolina**

Greensboro's violent crimes task force/Stacey Clutter: 336-373-2018

Stacey.clutter@greensboro-nc.gov

High Point violent crimes task force/Yon Weaver: 336-883-3042

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Project Safe Cabarrus/Jodi Ramirez: 704-786-4179

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Project Safe Neighborhoods Durham/Cindy McCullough: 919-560-4454

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Project Safe Salisbury/Teresa Vinson: 704-638-2175

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Winston-Salem/Rick Pender: 336-414-9397

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Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships/Kristen Di Luca: 336-324-2446

kldiluca@uncg.edu

For additional information involving reentry in the Middle District of North Carolina contact:  
Kenneth Fairbanks at k4works@aol.com or 336-358-0690

**Other Resources:**

**Project Safe Neighborhoods**

[www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov)

**Effective Reentry Programs**

[http://www.urban.org/  
uploadedpdf/1001016\\_reentry\\_programs.pdf](http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001016_reentry_programs.pdf)

**Easing the Transition from Prison to Freedom**

<http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=900454>

**Forsyth County-Project Reentry**

[http://www.nwpcog.dst.nc.us/CJ/CJ\\_Forsyth\\_Reentry.htm](http://www.nwpcog.dst.nc.us/CJ/CJ_Forsyth_Reentry.htm)

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